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SERVANT  
LEADERSHIP  
COACHING SYSTEM

## SERVANT LEADERSHIP FOCUS

A monthly newsletter to promote and stimulate servant leadership ideas & tools into the Viox culture.

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## Transformational Stories

### A Powerful Story of Modeling the Way!

By: Michael Rodgers

One of my favorite leadership by example stories is that of Mahatma Gandhi. **How closely does what you say as a leader align with what you do?** Read on... Here is another great story to share with other leaders. May we all be better leaders as we lead by example.

In the 1930's there was a young boy who had become addicted to and obsessed with eating sugar. His mother decided to get help and took the long

and hot journey with her son walking many miles and hours under the scorching sun.

She finally reached Gandhi and asked him to tell her son to stop eating sugar; it wasn't good for his health. Gandhi replied, *"I cannot tell him that. But you may bring him back in a few weeks and then I will talk to him."* The mother was confused and upset and took the boy home.

Two weeks later she came back. This time Gandhi looked

directly at the boy and said, *"Boy, you should stop eating sugar. It is not good for your health."* The boy nodded his head and promised he wouldn't. The boy's mother was puzzled. She asked; *"Why didn't you tell him that two weeks ago when I brought him here to see you?"*

Gandhi smiled and said; ***"Mother, two weeks ago I was eating a lot of sugar myself."***

**Wow!**

## CREDIBILITY IS THE FOUNDATION OF LEADERSHIP

James Kouzes & Barry Posner  
*The Leadership Challenge*

What leaders say they do is one thing; what constituents say they want from leaders and how well leaders meet those expectations is another. Strategies, tactics, skills, and practices are empty without an understanding of the fundamental human aspirations that connect leaders to constituents.

In 1983, Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner in their seminal work *The Leadership Challenge* began conducting their research to analyze thousands of personal best leadership experiences. The authors administered a questionnaire to more than 75,000 people throughout the world, asking what qualities in a leader would inspire them to follow *willingly*. The results are striking for their consistency. **Four characteristics rose to the top of the list, receiving more than 60 percent of the votes over time and across many cultures.**

*For people to willingly follow a leader, the leader must be:*

1. *Honest*
2. *Forward-looking*
3. *Inspiring*
4. *Competent*

These four characteristics are intimately bound up with the *Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership*. For example, you cannot *Model the Way* without being honest. You can't *Inspire a Shared Vision* without being forward-looking and inspiring. Being competent allows you both to *Challenge the Process* and to *Enable Others to Act*.

Let's take a closer look at each of the four attributes that compel people to follow a leader.

**Honesty** rose to the top of the list and emerged as the single most important characteristic people look for in leaders. Whether people follow a leader into battle or into the boardroom, they insist that he or she be truthful, ethical, and principled. The terms **"integrity" and "character"** came up frequently as another way of saying that they're looking for honesty. Honesty is strongly tied to values and ethics. People inherently admire leaders who know where they stand on important principles and have confidence in their own beliefs.

In the second instance — being **forward-looking** — more than **70 percent** of respondents ranked this attribute high on the list. People want leaders to have a sense of direction and a concern for the future of the organization. No one wants to follow someone who's lost. A good leader has a clear destination in mind for the company. The third attribute people demand from leaders is that

they be **inspiring**. People expect their leaders to be enthusiastic, energetic, and positive about the future. While leaders define the content of the work to be done, they can make the context far more meaningful if they're able to inspire people. Inspiring leaders breathe life into people's dreams and aspirations, making them much more willing to sign on for the duration. Emotions are contagious, and positive emotions resonate throughout an organization and help to make extraordinary things happen.

The final attribute that people want in leaders is **competence**. This refers to the leader's track record of getting things done. Although people demand a basic level of understanding of the fundamentals of the industry, market, or professional service environment, they also know that leaders can't be expected to be the most technically competent people in their fields. What's most important is that the leader takes the time to learn the business and to know the current operation.

All of these attributes add up to making a leader credible. **Credibility is the foundation of leadership.** Above all else, constituents must be able to believe in their leaders. In a separate survey, the authors found that people who perceive their managers as having high credibility were more likely to:

- **Be proud to tell others they're part of the organization.**
- **Feel a strong sense of team spirit.**
- **See their own personal values as consistent with those of the company.**
- **Feel attached and committed to the organization.**
- **Have a sense of ownership of the operation.**

This realization leads to a straightforward prescription for leaders about how to establish credibility: **Do what you say you will do.**

# Being at Our Personal Best as Leaders

## Two Case Studies

James Kouzes & Barry Posner

In different cultures and under difficult circumstances, **Alan Keith and Lindsay Levin** (see case studies) each seized the opportunity to lead. They chose pioneering paths and led their organizations to new summits of excellence. Although their cultures and circumstances are distinct, we can learn some important lessons about leadership from Alan and Lindsay.

We can learn what it takes to mobilize other people—by the force of their own free will and despite hard work and potential risk—to want to climb to the summit. While each story is unique in expression, each path is marked by some common patterns of action, patterns that provide a route for leaders to follow to keep their own bearings and guide others toward peak achievements.

Alan Keith and Lindsay Levin both understood the need to open up their hearts and to let people know what they believed. They understood that leaders go first. Neither would think of asking anyone else to do anything he or she was unwilling to do first. That's why Alan started with himself when it came to receiving upward feedback and Lindsay took the time to orient a new salesperson. They knew that people first follow the person; then they follow the plan. In the end, the legacy you leave is the life you lead.

### Case #1: Alan Keith

**BY ACQUIRING HANNA-BARBERA CARTOONS, INC.**, and its extensive library of classic cartoons—including *The Flintstones*, *Scooby Doo*, and *The Jetsons*—the Turner Broadcasting System (TBS) got instant animated programming for the Cartoon Network. But that programming wasn't enough for the market and it wasn't cool enough for the younger audience TBS was going after. Fresher cartoons were needed. Ted Turner, then TBS chairman, gave the Hanna-Barbera team two years to produce new content and turn the studio around: if they couldn't, he'd close the studio down.

Alan Keith was asked to take on the role of vice president of business operations and become part of the senior team, whose challenge was to completely reinvent the Hanna-Barbera studios. At the time, as Alan told us, a manufacturing mentality ruled the studio. **"It was about doing it cheaply, getting it out the door, and getting it on the air as quickly as possible."** The studio had a highly centralized structure in which one or two people made all decisions about creative issues, and all the work was divided into functional departments. Creativity had been dampened, and there was no free flow of ideas. Something had to be done—and quickly.

To re-create Hanna-Barbera, the new team had to make a dramatic shift from a manufacturing philosophy to a focus on *creativity*. This seems like an obvious thing when you're talking about animation but, as Alan understood, it required a profound shift in perspective: "Once we were able to articulate [that shift in focus], so many things flowed from that statement."

"The vision," Alan explained, "was to ultimately be viewed as the world's leader in producing cartoon animation." But vision is one thing, action is

another. Ultimately, the team decided to launch a program of unique, individual shorts, with all different characters and all different stories. The concept was both unique and risky. Producing animation is an expensive proposition, one that becomes cost-effective only with long-run syndicated programs. Thus began a huge, real-time research and development effort. The Cartoon Network would air the shorts in different time slots, against other programs, promote them in different ways, and collect data on ratings and viewer feedback. That feedback would indicate which handful were really the ones that seemed to appeal to audiences and therefore the ones they wanted to pursue.

To support this dramatic departure from the past, the old factory approach had to go. **The team "turned the organization on its ear, and we questioned every paradigm that the business had about how it worked, how it was set up, how it was structured, and how it was operated,"** explained Alan. The old departmental structure was reorganized into highly decentralized production units and cross-functional teams. Each unit focused on one of the shorts, hired its own team, and developed its own ideas. The support functions, depending on what they did, were assigned to work with different teams in the facility. What evolved was a much system, lots of team building, off-site meetings, and other forms of training took place. Alan dedicated himself to personally developing leadership within the organization. One of the interventions Alan sponsored was a 360-degree feedback review process, done on a multi-year basis so that employees' perceptions could be tracked over time. **Alan set the example by going first. He told us: "That was probably one of the most significant ways that I showed I was walking the walk, not just talking the talk."**

While turning around the Hanna-Barbera Studio was serious business, Alan told us that since the organization **"was about creating animation for kids, it should be a fun place to work."** They frequently had celebratory parties around the shows and "Anyone who did something that was incredibly useful or important to the mission was recognized publicly." Alan remarked, **"The whole face of the place changed. It was a very gray, dank-looking building when I first arrived. When I left, we had zany furniture in the lobby, the buildings were painted bright colors, and the conference tables had all of our characters' names engraved in them. It was like coming to work in a cartoon every day. That happened organically as we started to really change the place."**

The Hanna-Barbera turnaround was a huge success story. It created programs and merchandise that have produced billions of dollars in revenue for the Cartoon Network—and a whole new, trustworthy system for producing cartoon animation. Alan has since been recruited by Lucas Digital Ltd., LLC. As chief administrative officer, he's applying the lessons he learned at Hanna-Barbera to get extraordinary things done. What does he see as a key lesson? **"Know what you value, be willing to take a risk, and lead from the heart—lead from what you believe in."** We couldn't have said it better.

continued

# Being at Our Personal Best as Leaders

## Two Case Studies

James Kouzes &amp; Barry Posner

### Case #2: Lindsay Levin

**WHEN LINDSAY LEVIN TOOK OVER THE REINS OF WHITES**, a car dealership and repair group based in the South East of London, she already had a sense that, if they were to remain competitive and thrive, things needed to be different than they were—and she had a strong inner conviction about what needed to change. Simply put, she wanted every customer to have ***“an excellent experience dealing with us. I didn’t want it to be okay; I wanted it to be amazing—every time.”*** It was a big goal—and Lindsay had no illusions about the size of the task. She had started working in the family business (founded by her great-grandfather) as a teenager, but still professes to know little about motor engines and the product side of the enterprise. **What she does know is people.** This was the essential value-added and transformational competence she brought to the leadership of Whites. She knew, she told us, ***“that our ability to deliver amazing customer service was all about people—and making them feel motivated, empowered, and trusted.”*** As she said, ***“If we are not really committed to our own people, how can we expect them to be committed to our customers?”*** She knew that everyone at Whites needed to know the stakes and how they make a difference; they also needed to feel involved and valued.

Lindsay had this vision—yet Whites had an organizational structure, system, and culture that had remained substantially unchanged for many years. Its three departments—sales, service, and parts—operated largely independently, frequently blaming one another for any problems. The workforce was neither highly motivated nor committed. In short, she faced a situation all too familiar to businesses around the globe.

Lindsay started by holding focus groups of customers and playing back videotapes of the proceedings to the employees. The results were electrifying, for employees recognized themselves as the subject of customers’ complaints. To help solve the problems, Lindsay asked employees to talk about the changes they wanted to see happen. Employees formed small voluntary teams to work on implementing these changes. Initially these weren’t steps that had much impact on customers, but they put employees at all levels into the right frame of mind and gave teams the confidence to move on to bigger projects.

Ultimately, they made fundamental changes in working practices, most notably by operating as integrated and self-managing units in direct contact with customers. ***“As a result,” says Lindsay, “a very new way of working in teams developed.”*** The teams also transformed relationships with customers and technicians alike—so much so that employees now sometimes drop in on their days off to check progress on customers’ vehicles.

Lindsay made a commitment to training—sixteen hours a month—an expensive and even sometimes unpopular proposition—but it has paid off. Skills transfer is a reality. People who have been in training courses (covering both technical and people skills) go on to train others on the job. **The bottom line? Revenue and growth have more than doubled,**

contributing to many awards both inside and outside the car industry.

Lindsay herself has received her country’s Turnaround Entrepreneur of the Year award!

***“We really try very hard at Whites,” says Lindsay, “to make certain that we are ‘zapping’ people on a regular basis and not ‘sapping’ them. Zapping means giving people positive strokes—boosting their motivation by recognizing a job well done and giving them the confidence to push themselves further.”*** After all, as she says, ***“If everyone is doing a great job, what’s the problem in letting them know that?”***

All managers take time out to say thank you personally at every opportunity. Each month twenty-five to fifty awards are generated by anyone in the organization, to publicly recognize people for ***“Going the Extra Mile”*** in pursuit of serving the customer. Lindsay understands that it uplifts everyone’s hearts to learn what people are doing on their own, whether it’s traveling to Scotland to deal with a customer whose car has broken down or delivering a car after midnight to a customer who was returning from an overseas flight.

Lindsay firmly believes ***“You have to open up your heart and let people know what you really think and believe. This means talking about your values and the values in your organization.”*** She clearly knows the critical importance of doing what you say you’ll do and leading from the front. By demonstrating exemplary leadership skills, Lindsay has developed and guided a committed team to revolutionize the business and make it customer and people focused. At Whites, as in all high-performing organizations, leadership truly is everyone’s business.





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Coaching reminders:

Mike is available for individual leadership coaching.

Call or email for appointments.

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Empowering  
Thinking

Equipping  
Leaders

Transforming  
Cultures

...one person  
at a time.



"EVERYTHING RISES OR FALLS WITH LEADERSHIP."  
CULTIVATING THE VIOX WORK CULTURE